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## Legislature blind to reform

On this side, there is a governor who campaigned on educational reform. On the other side is the majority of the Legislature dead set against anything more than tweaking the existing educational system.

Gov. Linda Lingle followed up on her promise to provide a more responsive educational system with a plan to decentralize Hawaii's one-district school system. The plan was based, in large part, on the work done by a committee that was dominated by citizens who had no direct role in the state's educational system.

The Legislature, led by the likes of House Education Committee Chairman Roy Takumi, has gone to unusual lengths to consult the Department of Education, the very agency that would be overhauled by the governor's plan.

The governor's plan is based on a simple premise: Move basic control of schools closer to the customers, that is the parents of the students who use those schools. It's a premise particularly important to Neighbor Island voters who too often see major decisions about local schools being made on Oahu.

The first step to reform would be to put a state constitutional amendment on this fall's ballot. Let the voters decide. The amendment would allow the formation of local school boards made up of individuals elected locally and which could be held accountable for the quality and efficiency of local schools.

The majority of the Legislature appears to have



been co-opted by the state's educational apparatus and is taking the stand that it knows better than the voters of the state what is best for Hawaii public schools.

In attempting to get some essence of reform, the governor has modified her original request for a ballot initiative calling for seven local schools. Now she is asking for four local school boards, one for each county.

Takumi said the new proposal would be considered, adding this telling comment: "I don't think she (the governor) talked to some of the stakeholders about what the impact would be." And what stakeholders would that be? The only possible conclusion is that Takumi was talking about all the bureaucrats who have been begging for the status quo, despite popular sentiment to the contrary.

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